Sri M. ETHIRAJALU: *சார், 20—9—1960-ல் முதலமைச்சர் வந்தபோது, வரவேற்புப் பத்திரத்திலே பிரிண்ட் செய்து, அவர்களுடைய கோரிக்கையை ராமநத்தம் என்ற ஊர் பெயரிலுள்ள அந்த போலீஸ் ஸ்டேஷனை மாற்ற வேண்டுமென்று கேட்டிருந்தார்கள். அந்தப் போலீஸ் ஸ்டேஷன் ராமநத்தம் என்ற ஊரில்தான் இருக்கிறது. ஆகையால், கிராமத்தார் கோரிக்கைப் படி மாற்றுவதற்கு என்ன நடவடிக்கை எடுக்கப்பட்டது?*

The Hon. Sri M. BHAKTAVATSALAM: *இருக்கிற பெயரை மாற்றினால், எத்தனையோ பிரச்னைகள் வரும்; கட்சி வரும்; ஆட்சேபனை வரும். முதன்மந்திரி அவர்கள் இதையெல்லாம் மாற்றுவ்து சரியல்லவென்று அங்கேயே சொல்லிவிட்டார்.*

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Questions are over.

[*Note.*—**An asterisk (*) at the commencement of a speech indicates revision by the Member.**]

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS.

(1) Message from the Governor.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I have to announce to the House that I have received a message from the Governor of Madras recommending to the Legislative Council the consideration of the Madras Co-operative Societies Bill, 1961, as passed by the Legislative Assembly.

(2) Messages from the Assembly.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I have also to announce to the House that I have received messages from the Deputy Speaker, Legislative Assembly, transmitting copies of the following Bills as passed by the Assembly for the concurrence of the Council :—

1. The Madras Cultivating Tenants Protection and Payment of Fair Rent (Amendment) Bill, 1961 (L.A. Bill No. 28 of 1961).

2. The Madras Tenants and Ryots Protection (Amendment) Bill, 1961 (L.A. Bill No. 29 of 1961).

3. The Madras Cultivating Tenants Protection (Amendment) Bill, 1961 (L.A. Bill No. 30 of 1961).

4. The Holdings (Stay of Execution Proceedings) (Madras Amendment) Bill, 1961 (L.A. Bill No. 24 of 1961).

5. The Madras Pawnbrokers (Amendment) Bill, 1961 (L.A. Bill No. 30 of 1960).

IV. CALLING ATTENTION TO THE DAMAGE CAUSED TO THE POTATO CROPS IN THE NILGIRIS DISTRICT BY THE LATE BLIGHT.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: There is a notice given under rule 41 (1) of the Madras Council Rules by hon. Members Sri V. M. Surendra Ram and Sri T. Joghee Gowder. Both are on the same subject.

28th August 1961]

SRI V. M. SURENDRA RAM : Sir, I wish to call the attention of the Hon. the Minister for Home to a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the extensive and wholesale damage done to the potato crop in the whole of the Nilgiris district by the disease known as 'Late Blight', which is widespread and destructive and the consequent distress and great loss caused to the potato growers. The potato growers of Nilgiris district have not only lost their current profit which has ruined them economically, but they have also been deprived of seeds for the next crop. On account of this wholesale loss of potato crop, they are not able to repay the loans taken from the Government, Co-operative and other agencies. They are not able to find the money for the purchase of seeds and manure for the next crop. There is, therefore, acute economic distress among potato growers. It is, therefore, imperative that immediate relief in the form of postponement of payment of instalments of loans and supply of potato seeds may be given.

* THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM : Sir, potato which is the main food and commercial crop in the Nilgiris is grown throughout the year in a total area of about 15,000 acres. Potato cultivation has been the backbone of the agricultural economy in this district and most of the agriculturists depend upon the potato crop for their living. During the first week of June 1961 a fungus disease called "Late Blight" affected the main potato crop in the entire district. This is not the first time that such a disease has made its appearance in this district. This disease was possibly first introduced into India between 1870 and 1880. It broke out near Darjeeling in 1883 after the introduction of English varieties of potato there and in Bengal in 1901. The fungus which rapidly multiplies is said to have been present in the Nilgiris in previous years. Late Blight is always latent in the potato crop and so long as the rainfall is only moderate and there is adequate sunshine, the disease never makes its appearance. However, under conditions of excessive rain and moisture and lack of adequate sunshine coupled with strong breeze facilitating the spread of the infection, the disease gained ground and spread very rapidly. The effect of the disease was to dry up the leaves and the stem, thereby completely arresting the tuber growth. In all cases where the sowing was earlier (namely, in March) the tubers had already formed by the time the late blight set in; in the case of such crops, the yield was relatively better as the tuber had already developed fairly well. However, in cases where the sowing was done in the later part of April or early in May there was not enough interval for the tubers to be formed by the time the late blight set in, and the adverse effect to the crop was more pronounced. 3-30 p.m.

Potato is grown only in the Ootacamund and Coonoor taluks and not in the Gudalur taluk. The number of villages in which it is grown is 18 in Ootacamund taluk and 12 in Coonoor taluk.

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Harvest experiments indicate that in 14 out of 18 villages of Ootacamund taluk, and in 10 out of the 12 villages of Coonoor taluk, the yield has to be regarded as 1 :3 or below.

In villages where the planting was early (i.e., March) or where the rainfall was relatively less or owing to the lesser elevation there was more sunshine and less breeze, the damage has been considerably less. On the other hand, in villages like Ootacamund, Nanjanad and Ithalar where the contrary conditions prevailed, the damage has been severe. However, even in regard to such villages it is not as if the damage has been the same from area to area or from field to field. Even in adjacent fields, it was found that the yield in one was better than the yield in the other. In fact, even in regard to adjacent plants there was sometime difference in yield.

The opinion of the various agencies who have been connected with the crops is that the average loss is about 40 per cent. This assessment also corresponds to the fact that in a normal year, the average yield is about 1 : 4 or 5, and that this year in 24 out of the 30 potato growing villages the yield is 1 : 3 or less and that there has been some damage in the remaining six villages also. The price of potato last year was of the order of about Rs. 25 to Rs. 30 per bag whereas at present it is about Rs. 35 to Rs. 40 per bag, i.e., about 40 per cent high. It is, therefore, possible to infer that what has been lost by way of quantity has been more or less made good by way of increased prices. The following measures have already been taken :—

(i) Sixteen power sprayers, 274 hand operated sprayers and 20 dusters are in operation in the Nilgiris district. Pesticides were moved to all village centres to be within easy reach of farmers.

(ii) An additional staff of 6 Agricultural Demonstrators, 11 Demonstration Maistries and 2 Mechanics have been deputed to attend to this work.

(iii) Methods of control were printed in the form of leaflets and distributed all over. An area of 3,200 acres have been sprayed, so far by the Agriculture Department.

(iv) 2,681 metric tonnes of fungicides have been supplied to the farmers.

(v) The Madras Agricultural Pests and Diseases Act, 1919 has been enforced in the Nilgiris district by an extraordinary Gazette Notification, dated 11th July 1961 prescribing the remedial measures necessary to deal with the situation.

(vi) Commercial firms also did some spraying for their customers but unfortunately the spraying operations were handicapped to a considerable extent by the heavy and incessant rains which not only made it difficult for the staff to do the operations at all but also reduced the potency of spraying by washing away the fungicides.

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(vii) Orders have been issued for procurement of 3,000 bags of Great Scot type seed potatoes for distribution to the ryots at a cost of Rs 1,50,500, the premium of Rs. 15,000 paid towards purchase price being met entirely by the Government.

(viii) The Director of Agriculture has increased the number of sprayers to be distributed at 50 per cent concessional rate in the Nilgiris from 30 to 200 and he has continued the issue of pesticides at 50 per cent consessional rate.

Immediately on the outbreak of the disease this Government requested the Government of India to depute Dr. William Black of the Scottish Plant Breeding Station, Edinburgh, who is a potato expert of international eminence who is now in India under the Technical Co-operation Scheme of the Colombo Plan to study the incidence of Late Blight in the Nilgiris. Dr. Black undertook a tour of the worst affected areas and expressed the view that this disease could be completely eradicated by systematic fungicidal spraying and adopting field sanitation measures. He also informed the ryots that there was absolutely no need for them to feel despondent or worried about their next crop since the fungus would be killed by bright weather. He is also of the opinion that they could safely use the seeds from the current harvest for their next sowing season, wherever tubers have not been affected by the disease and that in most cases the tubers were fortunately free from infection.

With reference to representations received from the local organisations for relief measures, the Government deputed a Member of the Board of Revenue to tour the affected area in the Nilgiris district and to enquire into the extent of economic distress suffered by the agriculturists as a result of this disease. He has submitted a detailed report to the Government. The various suggestions made by him are under examination. Meanwhile, in order to ensure that speedy relief measures are undertaken, I had a discussion with the senior officers concerned and in the light of that discussion, the grant of relief on the following lines is being examined :—

(i) postponement of kist and loan collections;

(ii) grant of relief to small holders in the matter of repayment of loans to Co-operative Societies;

(iii) raising the individual maximum borrowing power to Rs. 3,000;

(iv) issue of fresh loans for cultivation expenses without taking into account the outstanding loans for the purpose of maximum borrowing power;

(v) increase of the number of sprayers sold at concessional rate from 200 to 560;

(vi) continued sale of pesticides at 50 per cent concessional sale up to the end of June 1962;

(vii) importing from abroad of seed potatoes of the Great Scot variety to the extent possible for distribution to the ryots.

The above relief measures are being actively considered for the issue of expeditious orders.

I have myself taken up the question of importing potato seeds from abroad with the Union Minister for Food and Agriculture, requesting him to look into the matter personally. He has promised to do so.

Let me assure hon. Members that there is no need to take any alarmistic view of the situation and that all possible steps have been and are being taken to give immediate relief to the potato growers in the Nilgiris district.

V. GOVERNMENT BILLS.

(1) THE MADRAS PRESERVATION OF PRIVATE FORESTS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1961 (L.A. BILL NO. 25 OF 1961).

* THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM : Sir, I move—

'That the Madras Preservation of Private Forests (Amendment Bill, [a] 1961 (L.A. Bill No. 25 of 1961), as passed by the Assembly, be taken into consideration.'

The Madras Preservation of Private Forests Act was enacted in the year 1946, with a view to preventing indiscriminate destruction of private forests (especially those in estates governed by the Madras Estates Land Act) and interference with customary and prescriptive rights therein. The Act, as it stands, now applies to forests situated in estates, as defined in the Madras Estates Land Act, 1908, and to private forests situated in other areas exceeding 30 acres, which may be declared by the State Government to be forests for the purposes of the Act. The Act provides that no owner of any private forest shall, without the previous sanction of the District Collector, sell, mortgage, lease or otherwise alienate the whole or any portion of the forest, and that no owner of any forest and no person claiming under him whether by virtue of a contract, licence, or any other transaction entered into before or after the commencement of the Madras Preservation of Private Forests Act, or any other person, shall without the previous permission of the District Collector cut trees or do any act likely to denude the forest or diminish its utility as a forest except the removal of dead or fallen trees or any act done for the usual or customary domestic purposes or for making agricultural implements.

The Act was originally enacted as a temporary measure for a period of two years with effect from 3rd December 1946 and it has since then been continued for one or two years at a time. It was

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[a] Printed as Appendix II on page 155–216 infra.